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POEMS

ELLEN P. LARLIN



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POEMS

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BY
ELLEN P. LAFLIN

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THE AUTHOR



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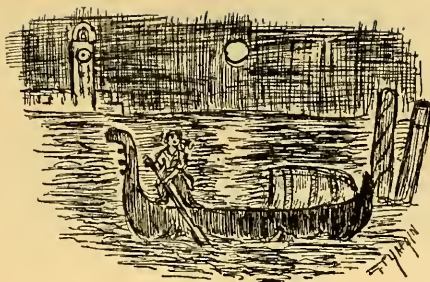
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TO MY MOTHER

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A VENEZIA.

GLIDES a boat o'er silvered waters,
Through a path of pale moonbeams,
Past gondolas nestling closely,
To the city built of dreams.

Ah! proud ruler of the ocean,
Queen of seas thou art no more,
But the memories left behind thee
Are as potent as of yore.

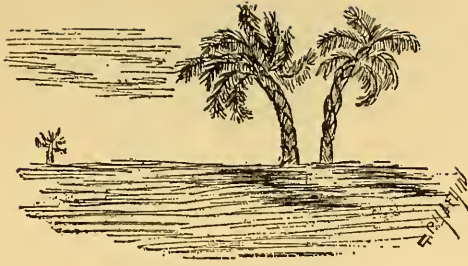
City of a hundred bridges,
What may phantoms pale behold,
Flitting through some dim palazzo,
Living o'er the days of old!

Centuries have passed on centuries,
All once gold hath turned to rust,
Men and women great and honored
Have returned now dust to dust.

Blessed be grand old San Marco,
Rearing still aloft its dome;
Still the bells of the campanile
Call the weary laborer home!

Now I look beyond the city,
Where the heavens meet the sea ;
Man's works last but for a lifetime,
God's for all Eternity.





LAMENT OF AN ARABIAN SLAVE GIRL.

ARABIA mine, so far away,
Thee have I not seen for many a day;
Though I long for my distant desert home,
I now must wander the world alone.

In memory I am home once more
Where the gold sands carpet the desert floor,
For a sister of the sun am I,
All night 'neath the heavens blue did I lie.

For men may sleep behind iron bars,
But I would sleep in my tent of stars,
Where the sighing night wind that one hears
Is melody sweet to Arab ears.

Where the burning simoon sweeps,
Where the moon her vigil keeps,
There was I born in Araby,
The land which I never more shall see.

Free as the bird which wings its flight
Through the desert air and the silent night,
Free was my life as life could be,
Free was my love as the boundless sea.

Fettered am I who was once so proud,
Now is my head with sorrow bowed,
But free is my soul as the vaulted dome,
Free till it mounts to its heavenly home.





THE VETERAN'S REVERIE.

AS I gaze into the glimmering flames
A vision sweet in their light I see,
'Tis the memory of a fair young face
Which the passage of years divides from me.

Ah! yes, 'twas fifty years ago,
My hair was brown above the brow;
My hand was as strong as iron then,
Though it trembles feebly now.

Ah! Margaret, your hair was gold,
Your eyes two sparks of heaven's blue,
In all the Southland's sunny plain,
Ne'er was there such a maid as you.

I loved her, and we wedded were,
She was the light which lit my life,
But I rode away at my country's call
To fight for the Union in the strife.

That night as we stood in the moonlight,
She gave me a packet rare,
'Twas a faded bunch of forget-me-nots
And a lock of her golden hair.

For four long years I fought for the right,
Four years had I heard the cannon's roar,
Four years had I seen men fight and die,
Stretching stiff limbs to rise no more.

In the fires I saw her face
Gazing tenderly at me,
And her deep love made me bold,
Urged me on to victory.

When the cruel war was over,
Slowly had those four years passed,
Then I knew with joy unbounded
I'd be home again at last.

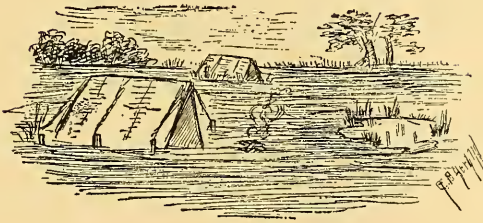
Where was she I loved so dearly?
Why was she not there to meet me?
Where was the merry voice I knew?
Why did it not gladly greet me?

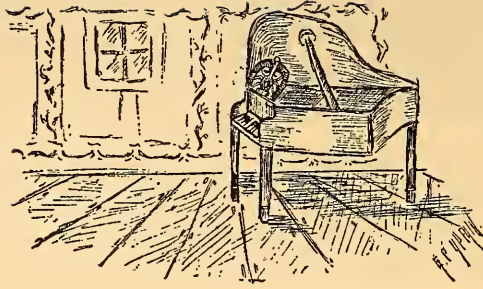
In a corner of the churchyard,
Where the pitying weeping willow
Droops its gentle arms above her,
Where the earth is now her pillow.

Though the mortal dust of Margaret
Lies there with the silent dead,
Her spirit to the God that gave it
Has returned, by angels led.

I am old, my step is feeble,
And my hair is white as snow,
I hear my Leader's last command;
I am ready, Lord, to go.

Far away I see a river,
On its banks a form I know;
Open arms she stretches toward me,
I am waiting, Lord, to go.





MEMORIES OF AN OLD PIANO.

AH! my friends, you see me here,
Standing in a corner drear,
In the prison of my case;
You stop and gaze upon my face.

Some pitying look, some scornfully,
Some pass without a glance at me;
Are there among you those to-day
Who have listened to Beethoven play?

While I my soul have felt expand
Beneath the touch of the Master's hand;
To you could I tell of tales which thrilled,
Were not my voice forever stilled!

In the salon of a Viennese
For years did I stand in light and ease,
While the Master struggled, alone and poor,
Till Fortune paused before his door.

And one night the great musician
Led, as though by intuition,
To the house in which I stood,
To the villa near the wood.

There were gathered young and old,
Many were the tales they told;
But hark! at once through the evening air
There floats a strain of music rare.

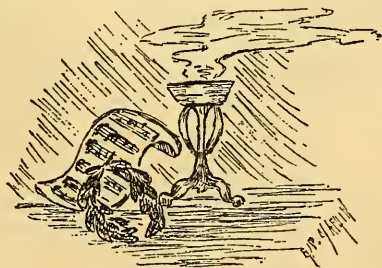
Outside in the silence of the night,
The Master paused in the pale moonlight,
The silver rays softening the lines of care
And reflecting the silver of his hair.

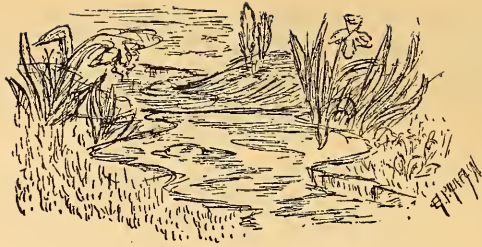
Within the house he came, and played
Melody, in heaven made.
Ah! ye who look on from afar,
You have seen the waning of my star.

But well may you look again on me
E'en though I stand here silently,
For first upon my strings did echo
Some chords sublime—long years ago.

Here I remember the years that are past,
Here am I patient to the last;
Ah! stranger, pause and shed a tear
For the memories that are buried here.

Near a century have my strings been rust,
Near a century the Master's hand is dust;
But though his life now ended be,
His genius lives immortally.

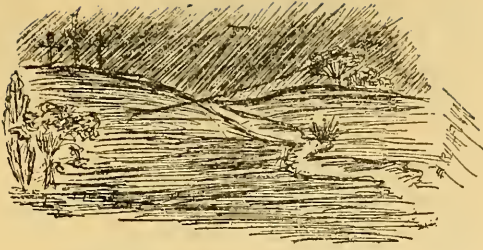




SONNET.

WHEN Flora, on her fairy wings,
Her magic wand o'er earth does wave,
The spirits of ten thousand springs
Arise reanimate from their grave,
The brook his icy boundary breaks
And rushes foaming as of old,
The crocus from the sunbeam takes
The light which makes its chalice glowing gold.
Half hidden by a sheltering tree
The purple violet blows,
And trailing o'er the mossy lea
The star of the arbutus grows.
From a thousand wood-birds' swelling throats, the notes
come glad and free,
Praising their Creator on high, in Nature's glorious
symphony.





WHY THE ROSE IS RED.

NEAR two thousand years ago,
On a hill by crosses crowned,
Mercifully a little brown bird
Fluttered ever round and round.

All was silent on that hillside,
Grim and gaunt the crosses rose;
Still the brown bird hovered closely
With the hope it could not lose.

Gently it descended, softly,
To the gentle thorn-crowned head;
Plucking at the darts which pierced it,
Till its breast with blood was red.

Grasping in its beak a thorn,
Flew away o'er hill and dale;
Flew until the morning light
Glowing made some unknown vale.

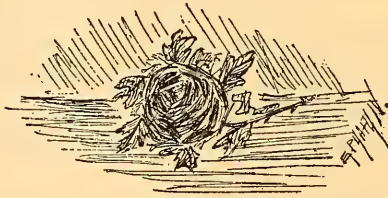
Many times the sun had risen,
Many times the stars had shone,
Still the bearer onward fleeting,
Onward through the air alone,

And at last alighting softly
On a bush where bloomed a single flower,
Pure white as the mountain snows
Meant to deck a lady's bower.

Resting there upon the branches,
As the drops his heart's blood drained,
Falling gently on the flower
Which e'er more was scarlet stained.

When upon the rose I gaze,
I think of the legend as 'twas told,
How the brave bird gave its life up
In the bygone days of old,

How it flew across the countries,
Paused upon the rose's tree,
Giving up the message to her
From the hill of Calvary.





SPANISH SONG.

I COME to thee
From across the sea,
To thee, Dolores.

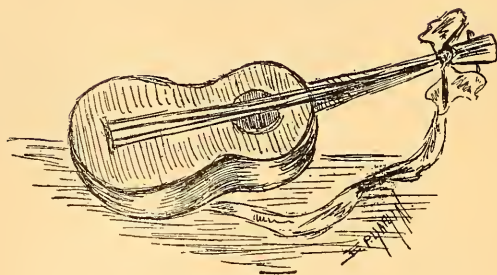
I play my guitar
Beneath a star,
For thee, Dolores.

Two black eyes look down on me,
Two cherry lips they laugh with glee,
Oh, my Dolores!

A red rose flutters to my feet,
With it comes a message sweet
From my Dolores.

Looking from behind a fan,
As a Spaniard only can,
Looks Dolores.

I glance up to the balcony,
A fairy form up there I see—
It is Dolores!





THE VISION.

IN the quiet of her cell,
A rudely carved cross before,
With her face upturned to Heaven,
Knelt the Sister, Leonore.

Midnight 'twas within the chamber,
The shadows flitted to and fro,
As the light of the wax taper
Flickered up and then fell low.

There with white hands clasping tightly
O'er a time-worn rosary,
Telling o'er the beads upon it,
Praying ever reverently.

“Ave, Lord and Holy Virgin,
I beseech you, hear my prayer,
Hark to one despairing, calling,
Groping vainly in the air.

“Three years in this convent’s shelter,
I have tried to do my part;
You who know that which is needful,
Send contentment to my heart.”

All at once through the fitful darkness
Glowed a softening golden light—
Leonora gazed bewildered—
Brighter grew it, and more bright.

Till at last within the brightness
She beheld the wondrous sight
Of an angel gazing at her,
Clad in robes of purest white.

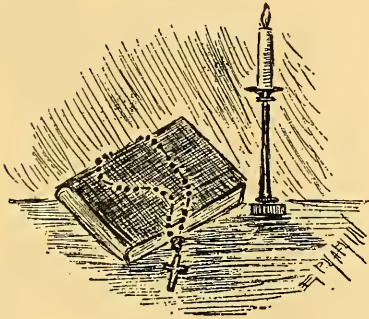
Gazing lovingly upon her,
Hands outstretched as though to calm,
And the smile upon his features
Was to her sore heart as balm.

“Leonora, lift thy head up,
Thy prayers are heard at Heaven’s throne,
And the seeds of peace forever
In thy heart thy tears have sown.”

With a look of infinite beauty,
Bent he toward the adoring nun,
Pressed a kiss upon her forehead,
Then she knew his work was done.

Fainter grew the vision, fainter,
And the bright light seemed to cease,
Left the room in fitful darkness
And the woman's soul in peace.

Ever after through her lifetime,
On her brow there glowed a cross of gold,
Where the angel bent and kissed her
When she vigil kept of old.





TO A BUTTERFLY.

THOU creature of the light and air,
With all the grace of fairyland endowed,
You flit each day from flower to flower,
And print a kiss on each, of love avowed.

The fairy guardians of the wood
Kept vigil o'er thy silken bed,
Before you e'er beheld the sun
They blessings whispered o'er your head.

One gave you beauty, and another fay
Her glimmering wings on you did place,
A third her wand did wave, and lo!
You upward flew with sprightly grace.

Creature of but one short hour!
Elusive, fluttering little spright,
Though you pause here but a moment,
You the world have made more bright.





TO JEANNE D'ARC.

YOU gazed into the great Beyond,
And in your face the love of country burned,
But who can say what scenes to come
Beheld those eyes to Heaven upturned?

The world was hushed,
Wrapped in the misty light
Which hovered o'er the distant hills,
When daylight yielded prestige to the night.

Ah! maiden standing 'neath the tree,
The mystery of ages on your brow,
A voice from out the twilight seemed to say:
"Maiden of God, go boldly now."

A knight in armor you beheld,
Riding amid the battle's thick affray;
Before you was a flying host
Which to the foemen brought dismay.

Around, the friend and enemy alike

Lay cold and stiff before Death's chilling glance,
While wildly rang the battle cry:

"Fight for the Golden Lilies and the King of France!"

Walls of cities rose before you, grim and gray,

Cities famed in legends old,

Troyes, Tournelles, and Rheims, and Orleans—

Sheltered were you 'neath their turrets cold.

Far away and indistinctly

Was a city—but it fades,

And your meditations left you

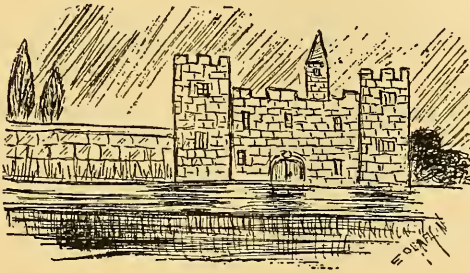
In the verdure of the glades.

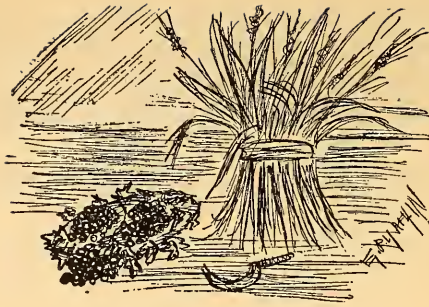
Courage! the victory shall be yours,

Your name shall live among the great;

And with a heart pure and unfaltering,

Go you then forth alone, to meet your fate!





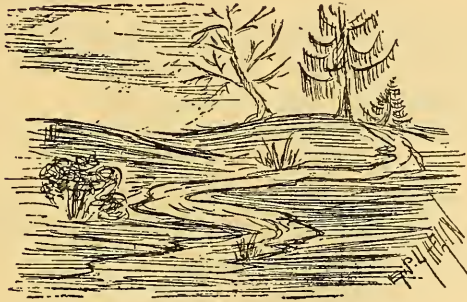
LATE AUTUMN.

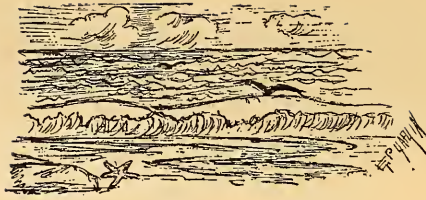
I SAW the trailing branches of the trees
Swaying in acquiescence to the wind;
I heard the voice of winter o'er the leas,
And in its breath the chill of snows defined—
The snow that resting place on branches bare should
find.

Above me naught there was but cold, grey sky,
And all about the sumachs bronzed leaves entwined;
O'er the far-reaching plains there came no wood-birds'
cry,
Only the silent, sad solemnity of Nature met the eye.

Gone are the leaves which decked the bough,
Their flaming colors scattered through the air,
And only is the memory of them left there now,
Only the lofty pine and hemlock lift their crests so fair,
As they, the monarchs of the forest, do their royalty
declare.

As when hope dies in man it leaves him dumb,
Until he takes heart from some promise rare;
Thus willingly do the trees to sleep succumb,
For so shall they sleep, to wake again, century upon
century to come.





DRIFTWOOD.

THE leaden clouds sweep o'er the sky,
The fury of the storm is spent—
The driftwood scattered o'er the beach
All that is left by the warring element.

The sea-gull soareth high, and then,
Descending, hovers o'er the waves' white foam—
He calls a summons to his mate,
And flyeth forth the ocean wide to roam.

But ah! the wood which strews the sand,
Which by the sea was cast upon the beach—
Were every spar with eloquence endowed,
What lessons to us they might teach!

They first came from some noble tree
Which stood upon a rock-bound coast,
The branches of a Norway pine
Which flung defiance to the wild winds' boast.

Then were the branches cut away,
The great tree made into a mast,
And fitted to a ship whose sails
Should gleam like snowflakes on the ocean vast.

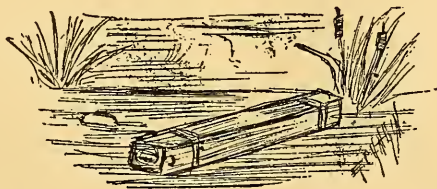
And from the port the ship set out,
Leaving the land far, far behind,
Until the dark night closed around—
Onward flew the ship, and on, left to the mercy of the
wind.

An awful sound of splintering wood,
A shuddering, shivering shock—
Upon a hidden rock she struck,
Lapped by the waves which seemed to mock.

I sit upon the silent shore,
And think of the ship which left the port;
I watch the cold sea's crested waves
Which creep up to my feet and then fall short.

Thus are the vain ambitions and the petty aims of man,
Which arrogantly aspire to the skies;
Thus do they e'er fall short
With ne'er a sight of the desired prize.

We are but driftwood on the Sea of Life,
Buffeted and tossed by the waves of Chance,
Until, when crashing 'gainst the Rock of Fate,
We are cast upon the Shores of Circumstance.



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